

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. - 12. (Cancelled)

13. [Currently amended] The ear tag according to claim ~~[[12]]~~24, wherein ~~the absorbent material is disposed transversely to a direction in which, in use, the punch of the male tag component penetrates through the animal's ear and to an axis of a hollow head of the female tag component, the absorbent material being~~ is arranged to be positioned, in use, posterior to a wall of the animal's ear.

14. [Currently amended] The ear tag according to claim ~~[[12]]~~ 24 wherein the absorbent material is a sampling strip, one end of which is fixed to the attachment and the other is located transverse to the direction of penetration of the punch through the animal's ear.

15. [Previously presented] The ear tag according to claim 14 wherein the absorbent material is connected by one of its ends transversely to an interior of the hollow head of the female tag component and by its other end to said attachment.

16. [Previously presented] The ear tag according to claim 14 wherein the attachment is fixed onto the periphery of the hollow head of the female tag component.

17. [Previously presented] The ear tag according to claim 16 wherein the attachment and sampling device include a slit over an opening of the hollow head of the female tag component.

18. [Previously presented] The ear tag according to claim 15 wherein the attachment is fixed onto the periphery of the hollow head of the female tag component.

19. [Previously presented] The ear tag according to claim 18 wherein the attachment and the sampling device include a slit over an opening of the hollow head of the female tag component.

20. [Currently amended] Ear tag according to claim ~~[[12]]~~24 wherein the male tag component and the female tag component each include a panel, the panels and the attachment being each provided with identical symbols for marking and identification.

21.-22 [Cancelled]

23. [Currently amended] The ear tag according to claim ~~[[12 ]]~~24 wherein the absorbent material is adhered to the attachment.

24. [New] An ear tag for marking and identifying animals, the ear tag including a male tag component, a female tag component and a sampling device, wherein:

the female tag component has an inner surface and an outer surface and includes a hollow head having an opening at the inner surface;

the sampling device includes an absorbent material, is fixed in a non-permanent manner to the female tag component and is disposed over the opening to the hollow head of the female tag component;

the male tag component includes a punch that is configured to penetrate in a direction of penetration through an animal's ear, the absorbent material and from the absorbent material through the opening into the hollow head of the female tag component under the action of an applicator tool having jaws, to fix the ear tag to the animal's ear, the absorbent material being disposed transverse to the direction of penetration, the sampling device thereby sampling biological material extracted from the ear of the animal when it is pierced by the punch;

said sampling device is separable from the female tag component; and

the sampling device further includes an attachment configured to fix the sampling device to one of the jaws of the applicator tool such that the sampling device is configured to be separated from the female tag component by said applicator.